



Losing It: How We Popped Our Cherry Over the Last 80 Years

Kate Monro

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Kate Monro's intimate survey of how we've lost our virginity over the past 80 years.

In an increasingly sexualised world, how we lose our virginity remains an untold story. Inspired by her Cosmopolitan award-nominated blog, The Virginity Project, Kate Monro sets out to ask men and women from every walk of life, how did it happen for you? Losing It brings together an astonishing collection of stories.

From the experiences of Edna, who lost her virginity in 1940 aged 25, to Charlie, a young, disabled punk rocker whose first-time experience many able-bodied people would envy, Kate reveals the poignant, funny and often surprising truth about other people's most intimate sexual stories.

Kate says, "I think ultimately what brings men and women to tell me their stories is that we all have an innate desire to want to compare our experiences with other people. We all just want some sort of affirmation to know that we are normal."

Losing It: How We Popped Our Cherry Over the Last 80 Years Details

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Author : Kate Monro

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Thoughts in Books says

I was instantly drawn to this book and requested an ARC off of Net Gallery. I am very thankful I did because I absolutely loved it.

This book is the result of many interviews and emails Kate Munro has received over the years, spanning many generations, orientations, points of view and disabilities. In between segments of other people's stories she also explains the project; how she got started and what she has learned along the way.

I was hesitant at first because topics like this can be delicate and the end result could become preach-y or even sensationalize sex. However, this book was able to present many people's opinions about sex and expectations through their own stories. Any beliefs they had were represented through their own experiences, often within the context of their upbringing or the era they were born into. I think that in this way a book like this is unique; we have assumptions about what other people think about sex or have encountered themselves, but not many get to hear about it directly.

I would definitely recommend this book to anyone who is curious, or might even have doubts on whether they are 'normal'. There are some blurbs that are more explicit (although the nature of this book makes it inevitable) which many may have to keep in mind.

Jessica Gaskin says

This was actually really interesting. A series of personal histories from completely different people living in completely different times. So many people sharing such an intimate story gives a really unique angel on social history. These stories, and the narration that goes with them, tell tales of gender, sexuality, poverty, class and changing social norms and values. They also give very personal accounts of the emotions that these people went through and how they feel their personal decision shaped their lives. The only thing that let this book down for me was that I felt there was a bit too much narration, some of which was repetitive. More stories and less repetition would have made for an even more enlightening read.

Jillyn says

Three stars and a half stars, rounded up.

Losing It: How We Popped Our Cherry Over the Last 80 Years is a nonfiction collection of stories of how people over the last eight decades have lost their virginities. Old and young, gay and straight, disabled and able alike, there is a vast array of stories that share the one moment of life that we all can refer to simply as "it."

This book is a very interesting look into the lives of other people. There's that moment when you lose your virginity that you wonder if your experience was how it is supposed to be. Questions run through your head: Was it supposed to hurt? If I didn't bleed, is it really "popping"? Does oral count? What if I didn't orgasm? Kate Munro's collection of firsthand accounts makes for a great comparison both between stories as well as to your personal "it" story. In short, you're not alone!

I found it fascinating just how similar and different, simultaneously, that these stories are. Some people lose it in the spur of romance, others are more planned. But so many of them share my own personal memories of awkwardness and emotional turmoil over what had just happened. Munro sprinkles in a fair amount of history and research, making the whole book come across as well put together and well thought out.

In fact, I was surprised how this book reads. To be honest, it was a little boring at times. I expected it to be more of an entertaining genre of read, but it ended up being more like a book you'd get assigned to read in a gender/sexuality studies course. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that, I just wasn't expecting it to be written in such a way.

All in all, this book is a pretty interesting look into the moment we (almost) all go through but scarcely talk about aloud to more than a best friend or two. *Losing It* is a great reference for anyone who is interested in sexuality studies or in looking at how their experiences compare to others'.

Thanks to Netgalley and Icon Books for my copy. This review can also be found on my blog, *Bitches n Prose*.

Niyati Joshi says

This is definitely one of the books that hits you with all the awesome it promises. Obviously, you're hooked with the title itself but the content doesn't fail to deliver one bit. Extremely heartfelt stories with poignant reflections from the author make for a very, very engaging read. As you go on with the book, you'll quickly realise that it's not about the particulars of who did what to whom but it's about the story - the time it's set in, the context and ultimately what it means for the people involved.

I'm not the biggest fan of non-fiction and I just assumed that something as sensational as this can very quickly prove to be disappointing. I could not have been more wrong. I believe everyone - **EVERYONE** - needs to read this because it seriously gives you perspective and if not for anything else, read it for the sheer entertainment value.

Definitely one of the best pieces of writing I've come across in a long time.

Beach Mama says

This was an interesting book which explored several different time periods and diverse couples. But I guess I was hoping for a more sexy vibe with a more erotic writing style. So overall it fell a little short for me.

* I was thankful to receive an ARC of this book from the publisher via Netgalley in exchange for a honest review *

Anna says

Fun, quick nonfiction read!

Jennifer Sullivan says

A GREAT book if you're looking for something fun and light-hearted ;-) It's fascinating to see how interpersonal relationships and sexual experiences have changed over the decades whilst the basic fundamentals remain the same :-)

Well worth a read!

Anita says

Interesting and enlightening. A nicely written, non-tacky account of various people's first-time.

Hazel says

The stories told were fascinating and I'd have happily read a whole book of accounts like those. Sadly, the authorial analysis of the cultural phenomenon of virginity in between the stories was shallow and not well done. I found it very difficult to read as the first hand accounts were all italicised and not terribly easy on the eye,

CuteBadger says

Kate Monro started website The Virginity Project to gather people's tales of their first time (or times in some cases). This book draws on some of the stories she heard and considers what conclusions can be made from experiences submitted by both genders at different times in the 20th and 21st centuries.

I enjoyed reading the first-hand accounts from real people, but wasn't as keen on the passages where the author tries to draw general conclusions about what these experiences mean. The conclusions drawn seemed very basic and obvious and I felt that this aspect of the book has been done better elsewhere.

Lisa says

I don't remember where I saw this book but the blurb about it said that everyone should read it, even virgins. That there is something for everyone. I don't usually read nonfiction but this seemed an interesting topic and I'm interested in this because I am a virgin and am saving myself for marriage and people usually think I'm weird because of this. I know I'm in the minority when it comes to virginity. This book could not hold my interest. The first few stories I read the people seemed so nonchalant about sex. I understand everybody has different opinions about sex, and it's a personal thing, but they seemed not to take it seriously. It was like it was just something on their to do list for the day. I don't know if I'm more of a prude than I thought, or if I need to loose my virginity before I read this, I just couldn't relate to the people in her book or to the author. Maybe I'll read it in the future when I get married.

Mish Middelmann says

Light, positive, direct, and covering a topic that is can take us to great joy as well as deep shame and hurt. I found Kate Monro's treatment illuminating and touching, and remarkably effective as a means to analyse gender role changes over the last century.

I'm left with a feeling of positiveness about early sexual experiences, from fumbling to painful to joyful, my own included. Kate leaves the reader firmly in a place of openness to any outcomes, appreciation of what is good about sexuality, and in no illusions about the hurts that come along with its gifts. And welcoming of the infinite variations in sexual experience and orientation open to humanity....

Angie says

Kate Monro's book may be billed as "this is how I lost my virginity" but don't let the title dissuade you. It's much more than that. A collection of stories and interviews from people of all ages, generations, backgrounds and sexualities, LOSING IT is a peek at the reality behind first times and what "first time" can actually mean. Many stories highlight the fact that many people don't consider the first act of penetration to be the moment they lost their virginity. Most contributors felt that they'd lost an innocence prior to or even after the fact, sometimes years later, that had a more significant impact on them.

This isn't about the physical act of sex. It's about the emotions, the era, and the context that led to and surround the physical act. It's filled with deeply poignant accounts of love, lust, hormones, societal pressure, and what effects, if any, the loss of your virginity may have on the rest of your sex life as you grow up and grow older.

It's not erotica. It's not a book that tries to sway the reader one way or the other. It's an honest look at sex through the years and how our attitudes have been shaped by time, knowledge, and feminism.

I think it's an important read for anyone that feels their bad first time was an anomaly. It wasn't. Sex is always awkward, uncomfortable and sometimes really painful the first few times around.

I'm torn between wanting every young person to read this book and thinking that they wouldn't be mature enough to handle what it is that is really being said between the pages.

As someone who loves figuring out what makes people tick, I found this to be a great peek behind the proverbial curtain into an area of life that few people ever speak candidly about.

Because this show has a gif for everything.

The required disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from Netgalley.

Jessie says

This was a lovely little book of virginity loss stories. Though I found Kate Monro's commentary a nice companion to the stories themselves, I often wished that she would say less and include more of the stories that she so fastidiously collected, for it was clear that she was meticulous and calculated in her choices. Overall, I found them riveting. Some were heartwarming, some heartbreaking, some hilariously funny, others somber, or edgy, daring or sweet. It was quite a collection. I liked how she divided the book between men and women, and was clear in communicating the particulars of an era. It really helped to understand the views on sexuality during a particular time, with special regard to the views on virginity. It's quite amazing how things have evolved! What was once a precious thing to guard, over time became a thing to quickly shed. And it's intriguing to witness these personal accounts that fall along the gradient of that shifting mentality. I didn't always think Monro was perfectly on point with her assumptions and interpretations, but ultimately I believe her goal with *The Virginity Project* to be noble, liberating, and revolutionary. It made me reflect, and mentally putting my own story along these others was somehow comforting. And though I wished the book as a whole was bit more culturally diverse (i.e.: not just a bunch of Brits), it still managed to exhibit diversity in a number of other ways that felt satisfactory. The book attempted to be thorough and challenging as it pushed the envelope of gender norms, views on sex work, disabilities, sexual abuse and/or assault, and the question of what exactly it means to be a virgin and 'lose' your virginity in the first place. All in all, it felt like a very personal read, as well as a very apt piece of social commentary.

Icon Books says

A groundbreaking and very personal insight into modern sexuality. Losing our virginity - it happens to all of us. How did it happen for you? What do other people think and feel about it? In February 2007, Kate Monro went on a mission to find out. She decided to ask as many people as possible - how did you lose your virginity? Men and women, old and young, gay, straight, Christian and Muslim; the stories range from the funny and the sad to the happy and occasionally, the unbelievable. Thus was born her much reviewed blog, *The Virginity Project*, and now this book. How do we define the loss of our virginity? What, if any, impact does the first time have on the rest of our lives? And in some cases how do we know for sure when that moment has occurred? After all sorts of conversations with all sorts of people, Kate will reveal the truth about other people's most intimate sexual stories. She also discovers that the answers are not always as straightforward as you might think.
